

Darien Representative Town Meeting
Parks & Recreation Committee
Minutes of the meeting held Monday May 3, 2010

A meeting of the Committee was held in Room 213 of Town Hall and called to order at 7:30pm. Eleven of the thirteen members attended the meeting, constituting a quorum. In attendance were:

Robert Cardone, Adele Coniff, Mark Dailey, Jeff Eng, James Howe, Anthony Imbimbo, John McLean, Peter Nelson, Gary Swenson, Cecelia Mundt, and Cheryl Russell (Chairperson)

Michael D'Urso and Lee Pratt were absent from the meeting.

First, Cheryl Russell reviewed with the members the agenda of the meeting, including a review of the Parks & Recreation portion of the Town of Darien 2010/11 Budget as well as the Chairman's report. Ms. Russell noted that the Budget information provided by the Town Administrator included information on the amount requested by the Agency, which was helpful for the review.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the various elements of the proposed operating and capital budgets. During the course of the discussion, members of the Committee made a number of comments and questions, including:

- It was noted that the only proposed increases from 2009/10 spending were an approximate \$13,000 increase in full time salaries, increased motor fuel prices and expenses to refinish the Town Hall gym. The Budget document referenced a contracted rate increase for one full-time position. The Committee questioned what the rest of the increase in salary expenses related to and Ms. Russell agreed to get an answer from Sue Switek.
- There was a general discussion of the role of the P&R Department in the maintenance and operation of the Darien Senior Center. It was noted that the Department had taken on this responsibility without a commensurate increase in spending.
- The Committee discussed the cutback in services necessitated by the budget constraints, including concerns about the decreased frequency of trash removal and cleaning of facilities at the beaches. The Committee suggested that the Department evaluate the pros and cons of increasing user fees over time in order to be able to provide an appropriate level of services.
- Given the deferral of the Weed Beach renovation and any other larger-scale capital projects, it was noted that the Department was operating in a status quo mode. The Committee suggested that the Department consider developing a long-range plan based on the ultimate re-institution of capital projects.
- The Committee noted that funding to develop the Diller property for a dog park had been deleted from the budget again. While the Committee understands the need for the 2010/11 Budget to be pared back to essential items, it was noted that the annual putting in and taking out of the Budget of the Diller project suggested that another approach to the dog park issue should be investigated.

At the conclusion of the discussion, upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the Park & Recreation Section of the 2010/11 Darien Town Budget.

Next, Ms. Russell presented her Chairman's report to the Committee. This included an update on the increased enforcement by the Town's animal control officer related to violations of the Town's pet leash and cleanup ordinances. There ensued additional discussion on the situation, which somehow the Town needs to address. Ms. Russell then informed the Committee that member James Howe has been acting as the Committee's liaison to the Weed Beach Renovation Project Committee. With the support of the Committee, Mr. Howe agreed to stay on in that role. Finally, Ms. Russell reviewed with the Committee the key points she intended to make at the full RTM meeting concerning the P&R budget. The Committee endorsed Ms. Russell's approach.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.